

West Nile Virus Information Sheet

What is West Nile Virus (WNV)?

West Nile Virus is a type of virus that mostly infects birds but can also infect horses and humans. It first appeared in Arizona in 2003.

How can you catch WNV?

WNV is spread by mosquitoes that feed on infected birds. The mosquitoes then bite people or horses, who may or may not become infected. Most people who get infected with WNV will not have any type of illness, or will have mild flu-like symptoms. About 1 of every 150 people infected with WNV will develop severe illness. People over age 50 are most at risk for severe illness.

What are the symptoms of WNV?

Usually, symptoms start 2-14 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. They include:

Milder (more common) symptoms

- Fever
- Headache
- Body aches
- Rash
- Swollen glands

Severe symptoms

- Severe headache
- High fever
- Stiff neck
- Muscle weakness
- Confusion
- Tremors, paralysis or coma

How can you be treated for WNV?

There is no specific treatment. Severe cases may require hospitalization.

How can you prevent WNV?

- When possible, stay inside between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are active
- Wear clothing that covers your arms and legs
- Use insect repellent on exposed skin and clothes. Always follow label instructions.
- Fix broken screens in windows and doors.
- Eliminate places where mosquitoes can lay eggs. Empty standing water from places like buckets, flower pots, old tires, wheelbarrows, etc. Empty and refresh water in pet dishes and bird baths every two days.